

# **Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 6380**

**March 4, 2011**

**Human Services Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee**

**By Howard Geltman**

**I am opposed to the consolidation of the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), into the Department of Social Services and the Department of Education.**

**I am 58 years old, and have been a BESB client since the age of 9. They have assisted me with my primary and high school education at the Oak Hill School for the Blind, undergraduate studies, employment training, and attaining my goal as a writer. If it weren't for BESB I would not have received a proper education, and could not help support my family.**

**BESB is the oldest agency for the blind in the country, founded in 1893, and used as a model by other agencies for the blind. It provides a single cohesive source of services for the blind community from birth on. It includes: Children's Services, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services, Business Enterprise Program, and Adult Services.**

**A 2009 survey concluded that 94% of VR clients would recommend BESB services<sup>1</sup>; 77% of Adult Services clients had a higher degree of confidence after receiving services<sup>2</sup>. Overall, over 82% of BESB clients were satisfied with services<sup>3</sup>.**

**BESB as a stand-alone agency works. Placing BESB into smaller parts of larger bureaucracies will have a negative impact on the blind because many of these agencies have never worked with the blind.**

<sup>1</sup> Center for public policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central CT State University (CCSU), <sup>2</sup> University of CT (UConn) Center for Aging, <sup>3</sup> RSA Website.